

Ryan has been laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. He is survived by his wife, Kayla, of Fayetteville, NC; his parents, SGM Garrett Savard and Marie Savard, of Lancaster, NH; his five sisters, Rachel, Rebekah, Virginia, Karen and Maria; and his two brothers, Jedidiah and Garrett. This American hero will be sorely missed.

I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring the heroic service of SFC Ryan James Savard.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, each year on November 11, we come together as individuals and as a Nation to express our heartfelt gratitude to our veterans for the countless sacrifices they have made over the years on our behalf. Thanks to them, our Nation is strong and free, and our American way of life that we are so justifiably proud of continues to be protected and preserved. Although Veterans Day is over for this year, our appreciation for our veterans should never be over.

Specifically, I wish to honor our selfless men and women in the Armed Forces who have served and continue to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom. October 7th marked the 11th year the United States has been fighting the war in Afghanistan, and that is why the Senate recognized October 7th as Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans Day. Much has changed in the world and our lives in the last 11 years, but the United States remains committed to fighting for freedom in Afghanistan. More importantly—our brave military men and women have maintained their commitment to us. They fight to protect us, and to protect our freedoms. The war in Afghanistan is so physically far away; it can be easy to forget and get caught up in our daily lives. I ask every American to not forget our brave men and women are still overseas. I hope those courageous souls never fade from the hearts and minds of the people of the United States. In order to remember and honor the veterans' service in Afghanistan, the United States Senate recognized October 7th as Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans Day.

I want to thank Andrew Koenig, a Marine and native of Casper, WY, who reached out to my office with this idea of how to remind Americans of the war in Afghanistan we continue to fight. I thank him for his service and selfless dedication to all veterans and those currently serving.

Think of both October 7th and November 11th as a refresher of what it means to be an American. As you do, remember to take the first opportunity you have to thank a veteran for what we have received from their efforts. No one ever gets tired of being appreciated—especially our veterans.

The work our veterans began years ago continues today as our brave servicemen and women serve at outposts here in the United States and all over the world. Stationed far from family

and friends, they have made a commitment to each one of us that they will do everything they possibly can to keep us safe and protected from harm.

Our country is recognized for its freedom and this is due to the men and women who serve in our outstanding military. They are patriotic, compassionate and courageous and set an example for us all to follow. In word and deed our veterans have shown their great love for our country. We are very grateful for their service. Thanks to our country's veterans, the world is a much better place. God bless you.

PROMOTION OF GENERAL DENNIS VIA

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, on behalf of the Maryland Congressional delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate GEN Dennis Via on his promotion to four-star general officer and his assignment as the commanding general, U.S. Army Materiel Command. We note with pride that he is the first Army Signal Corps officer in history to achieve the U.S. Army's highest rank. We in Maryland remain indebted to General Via for his innovative and flawless leadership during the U.S. Army Communications and Electronics Command's move to Maryland's Aberdeen Proving Ground as part of the BRAC 2005 process. The Army and Nation are blessed by his extraordinary service in uniform.

RECOGNIZING THE MEMBERS OF THE ALASKA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have the honor today to recognize three great Americans who valiantly risked their lives in the service of their country. SMSgt Christopher Widener, MSgt Brandon Stuemke, and SSgt Aaron Parcha are members of the Air National Guard from the State of Alaska who served as pararescuemen within the 83rd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron out of Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. I'd like to tell you about some of the heroic actions taken by these men between the 12th and 14th of November 2010.

Senior Master Sergeant Widener, Master Sergeant Stuemke and Staff Sergeant Parcha are assigned to an Air National Guard unit that specializes in dangerous combat rescue missions. Pararescue specialists, or PJs, train to be inserted into the most hazardous and precarious situations to save lives. They learn to operate in extreme cold and harsh terrain. They train on some of the most cutting edge equipment and master complicated medical procedures. If that isn't enough, they prepare to do this job in the face of an enemy that, when they are plunged into the heart of a battle, can appear from any direction.

Their mission in the Pech River Valley of Afghanistan was to provide medical support to a United States Army

task force. The operation was entitled Operation Bulldog Bite and was aimed at uprooting a determined and well-equipped enemy in the Kunar Province in the northeastern region of Afghanistan. After the battle began and the Army unit sustained casualties, the 83rd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron was sent into action to help extract the wounded and dead. Each of the airmen was tasked to travel by helicopter and to be inserted by hoist to evacuate casualties. Accompanying the dangerous task of insertion from a helicopter came the barrage of enemy gunfire directed toward the PJs. Even before they touched the ground, the PJs were targeted with a hail of bullets. Each of these men cast away their personal safety and pressed on with their mission. The skilled airmen arrived at the location of the wounded troops and began to triage and treat the casualties. They spent several hours tirelessly preparing the severely wounded for evacuation and hoisting each up to a lifesaving helicopter transport hovering above. After evacuating the wounded, the pararescuemen continued their efforts by evacuating fallen warriors from the U.S. Army unit while still receiving enemy gunfire. To ensure success, Master Sergeant Stuemke even returned fire on an enemy position. Senior Master Sergeant Widener showed courage by shielding the casualty on his final hoist with his own body.

In all Senior Master Sergeant Widener, Master Sergeant Stuemke, and Staff Sergeant Parcha contributed to saving over 2 dozen American lives and ensure the return of several bodies of fallen comrades to their families. Their efforts ensured the United States Army unit supported could complete its mission, an operation that secured large stores of enemy weapons and munitions and significantly disrupted insurgent activity against coalition forces in eastern Afghanistan.

These men have been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their actions. The award is the 4th highest decoration a member of our military can receive. I wish to thank these great men for their selfless service and dedication to our nation. They are all my heroes.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE JEANNE BURCH

• Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, at the end of this year the smallest county in Oregon is going to lose its biggest asset. Wheeler County Judge Jeanne Burch is retiring only because of Oregon law, which requires judges to retire at a certain age. In this case, the law is depriving my State of an exemplary public servant.

When she was appointed county judge in 1994, Wheeler County was close to bankruptcy. Since then, thanks to her